

South Dakota National Guard

Public Affairs Office

Phone: 605-737-6721 Email: ng.sd.sdarnng.list.pao@mail.mil
Web: <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil>
www.facebook.com/SouthDakotaNationalGuard
www.flickr.com/SouthDakotaNationalGuard
https://twitter.com/SD_Guard



March 27, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

S.D. Guard members march to push themselves, honor the fallen at Bataan Memorial Death March

By 1st Lt. Chad Carlson
SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY, S.D. – A group of South Dakota National Guard Soldiers joined thousands from across the country to march through the high desert terrain of White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, March 22 for the 26th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March.

The 26.2-mile march honors the tens of thousands of Soldiers, Sailors and Marines, both American and Filipino, who were taken prisoner, April 9, 1942 by Japanese forces in World War II.

The prisoners were forced to march to POW camps, beginning on the southern end of the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines, more than 60 miles in the scorching heat through the Philippine jungles.

The horrible conditions and harsh treatment of the prisoners during the Bataan Death March resulted in an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 deaths. Those who survived faced the hardships of a prisoner of war camp.

Sgt. Jeremy Eccleston, a member of the 842nd Engineer Company in Spearfish, has completed the march three times now. This year, he found inspiration locally and reached out to family members of Sgt. Lloyd L. Kelly (1920-1965), living in Rapid City.

Eccleston spoke with Tanya Nelson, Lloyd's granddaughter, and asked her if he and another Soldier (Staff Sgt. Brian Johnson of the 842nd Engineer Company, Detachment 1, in Belle Fourche) could do the march in her grandfather's honor.

"It meant a lot to our family," said Tanya, who first asked her father, Marlin, and uncles, Joe and Clayton, how they would feel about their father being honored by local Soldiers in this year's march. "They were honored. It was so nice to hear about people wanting to march in his honor after all these years."

During the march, Eccleston and Johnson each wore a ribbon honoring Kelly and carried another, which they presented to Tanya, March 26 in Rapid City.

"That was so cool and completely unexpected," said Tanya, who plans on framing the ribbon for her father and uncles.

-more-

Other South Dakota Soldiers drew inspiration from Bataan survivors themselves, who attended this year's memorial march and shared stories of their hardships with marchers firsthand.

"It was quite humbling to meet the Bataan survivors and to hear their story," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Ryan Mattfield, a member of the 196th Regiment, Regional Training Institute, in Sturgis, a first participant. "It was a constant reminder during the march that any discomfort I was feeling paled in comparison to what they went through."

"I will never forget shaking the hand of a Bataan survivor before the march," said Staff Sgt. Louis du Randt, with the 211th Engineer Company in Madison. "We only did 26 miles with water points every few miles - he did twice the distance without any help."

Participants in the event include individuals, teams, runners, walkers, marchers, active duty, Guard and Reserve, wounded warriors, and veterans and each finds their own reason to complete the marathon-length march.

"I was there to commemorate the Soldiers of Bataan and to challenge myself," said du Randt, who drew additional inspiration from Soldiers marching with prosthetics.

"Those are people to look up to," du Randt said. "It doesn't matter how bad you have it, there are Soldiers out there that have it far worse, and still do not give up."

It was great to participate as a team and finish the march together, said Staff Sgt. Mark Poncelet, 211th Engineer Company.

Since its 1989 inception, the memorial march has grown from about 100 to more than 6,500 participants from across the U.S. and several foreign countries.

"Attending the Bataan was an amazingly rewarding experience and I'm already looking forward to attending next year," said Mattfield.

-30-

High resolution photos are available at www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard



150322-Z-ZZ999-001: A group of South Dakota National Guard Soldiers gather before the start of the 26th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, March 22, 2015. The 26.2-mile event honors the tens of thousands of Soldiers, Sailors and Marines, both American and Filipino, who were taken prisoner, April 9, 1942 by Japanese forces in World War II and force-marched to POW camps resulting in an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 deaths. Pictured from left to right are: Sgt. Jeremy Eccleston, 842nd Engineer Company, Spearfish; Staff Sgt. Mark Poncelet, 211th Engineer Company, Madison; Chief Warrant Officer 3 Ryan Mattfield, 196th Regional Training Institute, Sturgis; Sgt. Ryan Dannon, 211th Engineer Company, Madison; Staff Sgt. Shawn Dempsey, 153rd Engineer Battalion, Huron; Sgt. Katherina Schaefer, 842nd Engineer Company, Spearfish; Staff Sgt. Louis du Randt, 211th Engineer Company, Madison, and Staff Sgt. Brian Johnson, 842nd Engineer Company, Det. 1, Belle Fourche. (Courtesy photo)



150322-Z-TD212-076: A group of South Dakota National Guard Soldiers gather before the start of the 26th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, March 22, 2015. Eight members of the SDARNG marched in the 26.2-mile event that honors the tens of thousands of Soldiers, Sailors and Marines, both American and Filipino, who were taken prisoner, April 9, 1942 by Japanese forces in World War II and force-marched to POW camps resulting in an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 deaths. Pictured from left to right are: Staff Sgt. Mark Poncelet, 211th Engineer Company, Sgt. Ryan Dannon, 211th Engineer Company, Madison; Staff Sgt. Louis du Randt, 211th Engineer Company, Staff Sgt. Shawn Dempsey, 153rd Engineer Battalion, Huron, and Sgt. Katherina Schaefer, 842nd Engineer Company, Spearfish. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Jeremy Eccleston/Released)



150322-Z-ZZ999-002: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Brian Johnson, 842nd Engineer Company, Det. 1, Belle Fourche; Sgt. Jeremy Eccleston, 842nd Engineer Company, Spearfish, and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Ryan Mattfield, 196th Regional Training Institute, Sturgis, were among eight members of the SDARNG that marched in the 26th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, March 22, 2015. The 26.2-mile event honors the tens of thousands of Soldiers, Sailors and Marines, both American and Filipino, who were taken prisoner, April 9, 1942 by Japanese forces in World War II and force-marched to POW camps resulting in an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 deaths. (Courtesy photo)



150322-Z-TD212-072: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Brian Johnson, a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 842nd Engineer Company, Det. 1, Belle Fourche, displays a ribbon honoring Sgt. Lloyd L. Kelly (1920-1965), a Bataan Death March survivor, at the 26th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, March 22, 2015. Johnson and seven other members of the SDARNG marched in the annual 26.2-mile event honoring the tens of thousands of Soldiers, Sailors and Marines, both American and Filipino, who were taken prisoner, April 9, 1942 by Japanese forces in World War II and force-marched to POW camps resulting in an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 deaths. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Jeremy Eccleston/Released)



150322-Z-TD212-073: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Brian Johnson, a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 842nd Engineer Company, Det. 1, Belle Fourche, and Sgt. Jeremy Eccleston, 842nd Engineer Company, Spearfish, wore ribbons honoring Sgt. Lloyd L. Kelly (1920-1965), a Bataan Death March survivor, at the 26th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, March 22, 2015. They carried an additional ribbon, which they presented to Tanya Nelson, Kelly's granddaughter, in Rapid City, March 26. Johnson and Eccleston were among eight members of the SDARNG that marched in the annual 26.2-mile event honoring the tens of thousands of Soldiers, Sailors and Marines, both American and Filipino, who were taken prisoner, April 9, 1942 by Japanese forces in World War II and force-marched to POW camps resulting in an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 deaths. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Jeremy Eccleston/Released)

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Maj. Anthony Deiss at (605) 737-6721 or cell (605) 431-8753, or e-mail ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil